



# Ad Val Advisor

*The Newsletter  
for Wyoming  
Property Tax  
Appraisers*

Inside: ♦ Note from the Administrator ♦ FCS Interest Rates ♦ Spotlight on Bob Cordingly  
♦ CAMA News ♦ Special Districts Update ♦ Trip to TerraScan ♦ and More...

## *Ad Valorem Tax Division Newsletter*

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## *From the Administrator*

My 50<sup>th</sup> birthday is in a couple of weeks. Pondering that milestone (?), I realized that I've also spent about a third of my adult life in assessment and mass-appraisal. And how that business has changed in that time! Shortly before I became an Assessor, they moved the monstrous old Addressograph machine out of the office. Not long before that, a mainframe computer system had replaced an old Wang system (anybody else remember those?). There were two PC's in the office with 5¼" floppy drives. They were "state of the art" IBM PC's with "blisteringly fast" 286 processors and 8 megabytes of RAM! (I remember 8-track music tapes, too, but we won't go there!) "CAMA" for many

Assessors and Appraisers was still pretty new.

So, when I see the new CAMA system actually being installed in our first county (Albany), I realize how far we've come in mass-appraisal. Part of me would love to be out in the counties building mass appraisal models on that new system! The joys and challenges of pioneering new systems and making them "work" for me have always held some fascination.

Our first TerraScan CAMA installation has had its not unexpected challenges and bumps in the road. Those have been far overshadowed with good successes. We are learning lots as we proceed forward. I use "we" collectively: the Division, TerraScan, Assessors, and all of our and their collective staffs. I want you to know that we are partners in this project, and the Division and TerraScan will stand with you to see the project through to success. We all have much to do in the coming months. To paraphrase Winston Churchill from his comments on events in an earlier time: "We are not at the end; we are not at the beginning of the end; we are at the end of the beginning." Like you, I am anticipating the implementation of the new CAMA system throughout the rest of Wyoming.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is more in depth discussion about the CAMA project from members of my staff. I won't repeat the details here. What's important is that they are working hard to make the new CAMA implementation work. The TerraScan folks have tremendous talent and dedication and it is showing in their

hard work on the implementation. I want to say a special thanks to Debbie Nagel-Smith and her staff. They have been working tirelessly, hand in hand with the Division and TerraScan, towards the successful implementation in Albany County. We are receiving the same gracious reception and hard effort from Kathy Ball and her staff in Uinta County as the implementation begins there. And so we go.

On other fronts, the Division continues important work to meet new and ongoing challenges, requirements, and change. To name a few: Additional significant litigation and/or possible legislation may be on the horizon concerning "intangible assets" in state-assessed valuations. Possible legislation proposing some sort of "senior homestead exemption" is still a possibility. The agricultural land study for 2004 is nearing completion, as is compilation of the Annual Report. Work on compilation of documents on special districts continues in anticipation of the stringent reporting compliance deadlines that begin in 2005. The Division will continue its work maintaining the CLT and WYS appraisal systems until their replacement by the TerraScan system is complete. We continue to work towards refinement and enhancement of appraisal and assessment educational opportunities for Assessors and their staffs.

Through it all, I want to convey to all concerned—Assessors, their staffs, my Division employees, TerraScan—that we do necessary and critical work for the citizens of

Wyoming. Some things don't change.  
We do make a difference.

Wade W. Hall  
Administrator  
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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## Visit to TerraScan

During the week of 9/29/03, representatives from Albany and Uinta Counties and Ad Valorem participated in an in-depth review of the new CAMA system at TerraScan's headquarters in Lincoln, NE.

The review consisted mainly of discussions related to AA and CAMA fields. In addition, TerraScan and the group from Wyoming went over several other matters that needed clarification before the first pilot implementation was to commence. Some of these issues included: customizing Class Codes, how assessment ratios are determined for each parcel, rounding of values, methods of loading state assessed and mineral values, linkage to the veteran exemption database, and verifying conversion schedules for Albany and Uinta counties.



TerraScan headquarters, Lincoln, NE

The representatives from Wyoming also got the first look at the customized Wyoming product, and received some basic training on the new system. The training included creating new owners and parcels, and sketching and entering property characteristics.

Geir Solvang  
Appraiser  
Ad Valorem Tax Division

## EWS from the Front

Live from Laramie ... The first troops have landed in Laramie in support of our CAMA campaign. Observers have reported minor skirmishes, but overall everything is going according to plan!

As you have probably heard, the first steps in implementing the new Wyoming CAMA system are presently under way in Albany County. First, I would like to extend our compliments to Debbie Smith and her staff during this exciting and sometimes frustrating portion of the project. I think we can all agree that being the first "beta" county is a tough job.

By design, the concept of beta counties was adopted to help the Department, TerraScan and the County Assessors to cope with the trials of converting to a new system. We have already learned a few important lessons that we would like to pass on.

**Lesson #1 – Relax.** The process of converting to an entirely new system can be peppered with little stress points that are just waiting to emerge at all the wrong times. These little bumps in the road, while not always planned for, are details that can be worked out during the installation. During the installation week in Albany, a couple of data download issues surfaced that delayed a few things. The problem, which was identified as a timing issue with the data, was quickly discovered and resolved. With the hard work from the Ad Valorem staff, TerraScan and the County Assessor's staff, we were able to address the issue quickly.

**Lesson #2 – Planning & Logistics.** Managing expectations and continually working at communications is key to the success of the project. In Albany County, we collectively agreed that it is important to meet daily to discuss issues that arise during the implementation. These meetings, although oftentimes brief, help set the tone for the

remainder of the day. Also, more work needs to occur before anyone arrives at the county office. This includes the completion of a detailed checklist that ensures the huge list of installation and training issues has been addressed prior to arriving at the county. Most importantly, we want to ensure that someone from the Division and TerraScan are available to answer questions and to work through issues as they arise.



**Lesson #3 – Space & Staffing.** Each County should be thinking about providing a workspace for the TerraScan team while they are on site. During the installation, this space will be required for on-site programming changes and data conversion. Also, the training that will occur will need to be coordinated so that each member of the Assessor's staff has access to some or all of the training that is being provided. Subsequently, the location of the training room should preferably be close to the Assessor's office and should be adequate in size to handle your staff's training needs. *Note, this is one of the items we will contact you about and will be included in our detailed checklist.*

**Lesson #4 – Connectivity.** Each County should be thinking about connectivity to the legacy mainframe CAMA systems. Once the data is downloaded for your conversion, the practice has been to shut down the old system for data entry. This, however, does not mean that you won't have access to the legacy system. The old CAMA systems will still play a vital role in validating the converted data in the TerraScan CAMA system. However, it is in everyone's best interest to transition from the old system to the new as quickly as possible. Please consider how many connections will be required to the legacy CAMA system once the conversion has commenced. As a benchmark, Albany County maintained one connection for the

mainframe system.

Also, if you will be retaining computer workstations outside of the equipment being ordered by the

Ad Valorem Tax Division and require these machines to have access to TerraScan, you will need to notify the Division as soon as possible.

#### **Lesson #5 – Equipment & Installation.**

The Division has ordered a large amount of equipment that will ultimately need to be installed in your county. Each installation includes a large laser printer that does not come with a stand. Please consider this when you are doing space planning for the equipment and ensure that a sturdy table is available for the device. Also, each of the Pen Pads (the field collection devices) requires connectivity to the server. This connectivity will help keep the most current software on the device and will allow for the downloading/uploading of records for the field. Remember, when the equipment installation teams arrive in your county, they will be disconnecting and connecting all types of hardware. They will need to have access to your office and, if applicable, the County IT server room as well. It is recommended that your IT person be available during the hardware install.

I am sure everyone is anxious for more project details and we will try to pass on as much information as possible during the months ahead. Most importantly, know that the Department of Revenue is dedicated to the new Wyoming CAMA project. With a lot of patience, cooperation and hard work, we will all make this a Wyoming success story.

David Chapman  
Local Assessed Manager  
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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## **Special Districts Update**

We have recently finished a complete inventory of all of our special district files in the Department of Revenue. To date, we have inventoried and scanned over 6,400 documents within over 500 files. This initial phase of the project has taken a little less than a year to complete.

Based solely on our inventory, we have an idea of which special districts will not be in compliance with the statutes by the end of 2004. For this year, in addition to sending out only our mass mailing of post cards to all of the special districts, we will be sending them a letter, as well, indicating which documents they will need to submit to be in compliance for 2005. In addition, we will be providing all Assessors with a copy of this letter and a report listing all districts within their County, the districts' compliance status, and detailed information on those districts that are non-compliant and currently lacking required documents. We anticipate sending out this information within the next 30 days. Since sending out a letter to all special districts in July, we have heard from quite a few and have received additional documents from these districts. However, we are still in need of maps, and/or legal descriptions, and/or resolutions from several special districts. When we send out reports of special districts to the Counties, this would be a great opportunity to exchange information if your office has documents for special districts that we do not have, and vice versa.

If you have any questions, or have special districts that have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sarah Sitterle  
GIS Coordinator  
Ad Valorem Tax Division

## **CS Ag Interest Rates**

The Division recently received interest rates from the Farm Credit Service out of Omaha, NE. The interest rate trend has moved downward. Commodity prices, as received from Wyoming Ag Statistics, were up. Along with these trends, the drought has continued across most of the State.

The Division notified members of the Ag Research Committee of the upcoming Ag Land Valuation Study meeting to be held November 7. The distribution of the study should be mid-November. We will continue to publish the study on the Department of Revenue's website.

Robert Eicher  
I.T. Specialist  
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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## **Employee Spotlight**

It's October already, soon to be November, and before you know it, the holidays will be here and gone. This time of year seems to fly by faster every year. Speaking of time flying, would you believe the Ad Val Advisor is six months old! In the past six months, it has been rewarding sharing interesting facts about my co-workers with everyone, and I hope you have enjoyed getting to know more about them as well. In this issue, we will be focusing on another one of our State Assessed personnel, Bob Cordingly.

Bob joined the Ad Valorem staff in August 1990, taking a position with the State Assessed Section as a Principal Appraiser. Bob mentioned what he has enjoyed most about his job for the past 13 + years is the appraisal and analysis, along with dealing with utility companies.



Before his illustrious career with Ad Valorem began, Bob started out in the military for a few years, being stationed in Georgia and Virginia. His last rank was a Lieutenant in the Signal Corp. Following military service, he moved to Rapid City, South Dakota to work for Farm Credit Services as an Ag Loan Officer. After working there for a while, Bob was offered a Branch Manager position in Gillette for Farm Credit Services. He worked there until deciding to manage the family ranch for about ten years. Then, Bob went to work for the U.S.D.A. before working for the Department of Revenue.



Bob was born in Gillette and has lived most of his life in Wyoming, except for being stationed in Georgia and Virginia in the military, and while working for Farm Credit Services in Rapid City. Bob attended the University of Wyoming where he earned a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and a Master's degree in Agricultural Economics. He has also attended several schools and seminars during his career with the State. Bob has attended all three week-long courses at the Western States Tax Administrators School at Utah State University. He has also attended the Wichita State University Railroads and Public Utility tax appraisal school/seminar six times. He mentioned that he enjoys this seminar because it is one where government and industry people attend. In addition, he said that it is an excellent opportunity to get to know industry people and examine tax appraisal from both perspectives. Bob has also completed several IAAO courses during his tenure.

When asked if he wanted to mention anything special about his family, Bob wanted to talk about his wife Teri and daughters Kaycee, 10 yrs., and Bobijo, 1 month old. Kaycee is an active young lady involved in several activities including both Girl

Scouts and 4-H. Bobijo is his new little bundle of joy whose main activities these days include eating and sleeping a lot. In his free time, Bob enjoys fishing and working with animals, mostly training horses and dogs.

**Favorite Movie:** Lonesome Dove  
**Favorite Food(s):** Ribeye Steak  
 Beef Roast

Sarah Sitterle  
 GIS Coordinator  
 Ad Valorem Tax Division

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## Quote of the Month

"You can only govern men by serving them. The rule is without exception."

Victor Cousin,  
 French Philosopher

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## About the Newsletter

The Ad Val Advisor can now be viewed and downloaded from the Internet. The web site address for the published newsletters is: <http://revenue.state.wy.us/doclistout.asp?div=12&dtype=10&dtsub=7>. You can quickly access this site by going to <http://revenue.state.wy.us>, then click on "Maps, Calendars, Publications" on the left side of the screen, then "Newsletters", and finally "Ad Valorem/Property Tax".

An email will be sent to the Assessors every time a new issue is available on the Internet. If you would like a hard copy to be sent to you, please contact Geir Solvang after you have received the notification.

As we mentioned in our first issue of the Ad Val Advisor, we encourage the Assessors and their

staffs to submit articles to the newsletter. We use this publication to bring you information and news from the Division, but we feel it is equally important that the County Assessor Offices use it to share relevant news from their own local governments. Contact Geir Solvang at (307) 777-5432, or email: [gsolva@state.wy.us](mailto:gsolva@state.wy.us), for information on how to get your ideas, issues, etc. published in the newsletter.

Geir Solvang  
 Appraiser  
 Ad Valorem Tax Division

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### Upcoming IAAO Courses

**1/12/04 – 1/16/04**

IAAO Course 101  
 Fundamentals of Real  
 Property Appraisal,  
 Casper, WY

**7/12/04 – 7/16/04**

IAAO Course 300  
 Fundamentals of Mass  
 Appraisal,  
 Lander, WY

**8/16/04 – 8/20/04**

IAAO Course 500  
 Assessment of Personal  
 Property,  
 Casper, WY

**9/21/04 – 9/22/04**

IAAO Course 354  
 Multiple Regression Analysis  
 for Real Property Valuation,  
 Casper, WY